

Session 11-01, a Special Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Bremicker at 5:33 p.m. on February 17, 2011 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS BREMICKER, HARRALD, BRANN, CARLINSCHAUER, CUMMING

TELEPHONIC: COMMISSIONERS ARCHIBALD AND LILLIBRIDGE (EXCUSED)

STAFF: CITY MANAGER WALT WREDE
PLANNING TECHNICIAN JULIE ENGBRETSEN
RECREATION SPECIALIST/COMMUNITY SCHOOLS COORDINATOR MIKE ILLG
PARKS MAINTENANCE COORDINATOR ANGIE OTTESON
DEPUTY CITY CLERK I RENEE KRAUSE

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

HARRALD/BRANN - MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES *(Minutes are approved during Regular Meetings.)*

There were no minutes for approval.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no public comments.

VISITORS

Carmen Fields - Natural Playgrounds

Ms. Fields noted she has been involved in brainstorming ideas on improvements for the playground at the park. She gave a presentation on the benefits to having a natural playground versus the universal standard concept of a playground.

If you've ever climbed trees, rolled down hills, scrambled up rocks, made mud pies, dammed up water, hid in grass, played house in bushes, built snow forts, dug in sand, played in dirt, planted seeds, jumped in leaves, tracked animals, or had fun outside in other, similar ways, you've experienced natural play.

Natural Playgrounds combine landscape elements, movement corridors, sun paths, weather patterns, drainage courses, plant groupings, and other site amenities with carefully chosen natural materials, structures, and features to create safe, accessible, age-appropriate play, social, and learning opportunities in natural play areas that look and feel like they've been there forever.

Natural playgrounds look like miniature natural landscapes, and they're full of intriguing play and learning opportunities just waiting to be discovered by children of all ages. Sometimes they're referred to as ecological parks, play parks, or nature parks.

Depending on the scope of the project, fitness structures, furniture, and site fixtures are incorporated into the design. Manufactured playgrounds challenge children's physical development (mostly gross motor skills) but does very little to challenge their emotional, social, and cognitive creativity.

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Natural playgrounds made with natural play elements, on the other hand, mirror natural world experiences that help children - and young adults - constantly discover new things about themselves and the world around them through experimentation, observation, problem-solving, and manipulation. In addition, natural playgrounds can be very physically challenging! Children gravitate naturally toward sand, water, loose parts, and stacking materials. Children need exposure to nature. They need play that helps them develop a sense of beauty. Natural play areas use natural landscapes as their model, and incorporate as many of the following features as possible:

- Topography is sculptured, transformed to include berms, stone walls, sand pits, water courses, mud areas, and natural amphitheaters.
- Vegetation is enhanced by indigenous, summer and winter trees, shrubs, herbs, flowers, vegetable and other garden plants.
- Landscaping includes boulders, levels and tiers, park benches, rain gardens, path systems, grassy areas.
- Structures include gazebos, pergolas, arbors, gateways, shade tents, furniture, game tables, and climbing walls.
- Outdoor Art starts with a well-designed framework for the entire play area and then includes mural walls, play sculpture, sound gardens, land and vegetative sculptures, and reflecting "pools."
- Learning tools include sundials, rain gauges, nature trails, and lots of loose parts.

Play areas include places for old-fashioned games, group sports, and challenge and fitness courses.

Questions answered for the Commissioners included the typical area used to create a natural playground, and approximate costs to create a natural playground.

Patti Boily, Independent Living Center - Pedestrian Access Bridge

Ms. Boily stated that the Independent Living Center (ILC) is advocating for a bridge across Woodard Creek. She noted that the bridge would be a conduit to access the park and campgrounds without having to traverse down to Fairview Avenue and back up the hill to reach the park. She noted that a group was spearheading a project using a gangway that is owned by the City as the bridge, however due to the untimely and unexpected death of their contractor the group will have to back off and locate another contractor willing to offer their services. She would like to advocate for the Commissioners support to have this bridge constructed since it would benefit the community as a whole to have additional access to the park.

She elaborated on the idea of the group to use the 70 foot gangway but she did not have any right of way information or details. She stated that the ILC would really like to see this access created in the future. She responded to a question regarding preferences to bridge style that a suspension bridge would be great however there was belief that the proposed gangway can be adapted to use to make this access point.

Conversation with Jack Cushing an idea the group had was to use the City owned gangway and there had been conversation between ILC, the group and the City. However, the project depended greatly upon the equipment and expertise of Ray Clapp who recently passed away. The City is requesting engineering also on this project. Ms. Boily responded that she does not know all members of the group spearheading this project as she has just recently gotten involved and did not have all the information.

The Commissioners thanked her for speaking to them on this matter.

There was no further discussion.

RECONSIDERATION

There were no items scheduled for reconsideration.

STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS

City Manager Wrede spoke on the issue of using the 70 foot gangway as a pedestrian bridge. He noted that Carey Meyer was not confident that this would be appropriate to span the area. However, they did consider the possibility if something could be engineered. The City would sit down with Jack Cushing and discuss a bridge. He was not sure use of the gangway would be the best solution. The City is flexible, money could be saved if volunteers are used and City Council has granted permission to use/ or sell the gangway in a manner as the City saw fit. The gangway is owned by the Port and Harbor and he is positive they would like to get some money for it; it currently has a price tag of \$15,000 he believed. The cost to replace this gangway was around \$90,000. However, they are not averse to using it as a donation if needed.

Chair Bremicker agreed with trying to recoup some of the cost of replacing this gangway and noted the expense to the harbor.

City Manager Wrede noted there is money from a grant for the park that is later on the agenda.

There was no further discussion.

Commissioner Brann gave a brief progress report on the Kachemak Drive Path Committee. He noted the Committee has reviewed various options for placement of a pedestrian/bike path along the roadway to include narrowing the travel lanes and installation of a path along the road in the right of way. They are looking into what can be done and not done. He briefly described a project underway in Fairbanks that is almost identical to what they would like to accomplish. He stated the committee is still reviewing what can and cannot be done.

Chair Bremicker noted that it was agreed that there will be a need to use a variety of options in order to get this accomplished. The committee is still working its way down the road.

Chair Bremicker noted that the Spit Parks and Recreation Committee has not met in a while and hopes that they will reconvene the meeting soon.

There was no further discussion.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

No public hearings were scheduled.

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Karen Hornaday Park

1. Letter from City Manager Wrede to Jean Mason, Grants Administrator, Department of Commerce Community and Economic Development dated January 26, 2011

a. Memorandum to Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission from Anne Marie Holen, Special Projects Coordinator dated June 11, 2010

b. Cost Estimate from Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant May 2010

2. Email dated February 9, 2011 from Jack Wiles, Friends of Woodard Creek Re: Funding Priorities for Karen Hornaday Park

a. Presentation on recommendations from Friends of Woodard Creek

City Manager Wrede stated that the document included in the packet contained the language in the grant. He tried to make the language as broad as possible to cover a variety of options to accomplish in Phase I of improvements. He noted that grant agreements can be amended. He stated that the Commission needed to recommend to Council what the phase one priorities should be for the park. He indicated that there is \$305,000.00 available to start work this season on the park.

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Discussion on what issues should be addressed ensued; work on the ball fields could commence mid-July and be completed before snow; the road realignment preliminary work could be done in Phase 1 but, actual construction would be in Phase 2; more funding would be needed to complete this as it was one of the most expensive projects within the park; some items like playground and demolition can be done by volunteers and public works personnel; then funds could be removed from those line items and switched to the surveying and engineering work on the road realignment; questions regarding the monies that City Council promised for the project as a match if a grant is received from Land and Water Conservation next year was had by the commission; clarification of in-kind matches for this grant was also noted.

Chair Bremicker thanked the City Manager for his input.

City Manager Wrede addressed a question from the audience regarding the Ordinance appropriating the money was scheduled on February 28, 2011 and it was a formality only. The Council was not directing how to spend the money only officially accepting it and saying they were going to spend it.

Mr. Jack Wiles, spoke on the condition of the park and the deferred maintenance that was needed. He noted that in essence they are rebuilding the entire park. The one good thing was they did not have to spend money purchasing land for the park. It was already owned. Mr. Wiles proceeded to outline briefly how to prioritize the many components of the park that were included in the first phase. He noted that the commission could decide to spend it on one item such as the playground and do that one component really good or use the funding to address several priorities. Mr. Wiles then recommended on how the commissioners can approach how to allocate funds to those items they selected. The biggest prohibitive is the short time frame they have to get these recommendations to council for approval and implementation this season.

He commented on the road realignment that the actual costs will not be realized until they actually get someone to review this project, design and determine feasibility of this proposed road. He recommended that the first question they consider is - Are we going to address this road realignment? Are we going to allocate funds in phase one to address this issue?

Mr. Wiles commented that he hopes this document assists the commission in prioritizing the project and needs of the park.

Commissioner Brann commented that this document really made him think and he would like a few blank copies of the document. He agreed that they need to get on this right away as much as he would love an open comment opinion from all user groups but he does have concerns with studying things to death and then there is no funding to accomplish anything.

Chair Bremicker was agreeable that the money could be spread around and do a little bit on everything or put it on one thing. He was very concerned with parking on one side of the road and the danger of having to cross the road. He felt this was very important and needed to be addressed first.

The Commissioners discussed the need to establish a subcommittee to address the issues of the park. Commissioner Cumming was concerned that the other Commissioners were not fully versed in the complexities of this park and it would require a minimum of three meetings to be up to speed. It was noted that a committee needed two commissioners, the time required to set and advertise meetings of a committee would be prohibitive. It was noted that it would be easier to get the commission as a whole up to speed. Commissioner Cumming did not want to see snap decisions made on the park. She further elaborated that this commission would not be able to focus on anything else in order to get up to speed.

Commissioner Harrauld acknowledged Commissioner Cumming's preference for a subcommittee but she would also like to hear comments from the user groups. Further discussion on the requirement of two commissioners needed for establishing a sub-committee. There were no volunteers at this time from the commissioners present to sit on a park sub-committee. It was agreed to conduct a worksession on March 4, 2011 at 5:30 p.m. to prioritize and establish recommendations for the park to submit to council for approval. A brief comment was made about setting a second worksession at this time but

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was not moved on by the commission. This will also be on the agenda for the regular meeting on March 17, 2011.

Staff present offered some suggestions on how to proceed with prioritizing the different items within the project. It was recommended to invite the different user groups to the worksession, and schedule the worksession accordingly to allow each user group a specified time. It was noted that each group can be allowed 10 minutes then 15 minutes for Question and Answers. Chair Bremicker stated that each Commissioner should take the time to review this and establish their priorities for the worksession. It was further requested that the top user groups, Little League, Homer Independent Living Center, the playground group, Friends of Woodard Creek, Mike Illg and Angie Otteson bring the top ten priorities to this worksession.

Commissioner Cumming commented on the friends of Woodard Creek and her opinion of the goals and outreach of this group.

Commissioner CarlinSchauer arrived at 7:10 p.m.

Chair Bremicker quickly filled in Commissioner CarlinSchauer on the worksession and issues on the agenda.

Staff will be in attendance at the worksession.

There was no further discussion.

B. Strategic Plan Update for 2011

1. Memorandum dated January 11, 2011 from Julie Engebretsen Re: Strategic Plan - What Is It and Why Have One

Planning Technician Engebretsen explained why use Strategic Plan. The last time this was done by the Commission was a couple of years ago and there is now a whole new group so this should be reviewed and revised as needed.

Review of the plan by the Commissioners determined the following:

Under 3-5 year - add clean up existing parks and open spaces

Under 3-5 year or Objective - add a Park and Recreation Department

Under 1-2 year - add Diamond Creek Park Plan

Objectives - 1-2 years

Pedestrian Bike Path along Kachemak Drive - sub-committee established and working on

Develop Park in Town Center and plan for pathways and trails - Move to 5 year plus category but do not remove from Strategic Plan.

Document current and historical trails, create a pamphlet to show hiking trails, beaches recreational access points, parks, campgrounds and basic rules and etiquette - Staff to work on and add to website.

Remove from plan - Poopdeck trail signage - this item was completed.

Leave the Karen Hornaday Park on the list

Increase budget - keep

Mariner Park Driveway access - keep

Create an overall sign design for City and Town Center. Work with Public Works. Specify that signage is for parks only, remove the Town Center aspect.

Add acquire city owned soccer field under 1-2 year goals.

Commissioner CarlinSchauer stated he is in the middle of this and he has a conflict of interest but did not want a soccer field that was not right. A soccer field must be thought out carefully.

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Commissioner Harrauld inquired if they should have the Spit Parks on this plan. Staff responded in the affirmative if they had a description of the purpose/mission of the committee.

Commissioner Brann requested under long term to add purchasing/acquire additional park land as new park or add on to existing parks. He would also like to add under objectives - Support of the Wooden Boat society. Staff explained that this issue will be addressed through the Land Allocation Plan recommendations and approval by Council.

Commissioner Harrauld requested supporting Jack Gist Park volunteer group and assist in their focus priorities as able.

Commissioner Cumming would like to see a master plan for this park be on the list and completed before anything else is done in this park.

Commissioner Brann asked about adding the review and update of the Homer Area Non-motorized Transportation Plan and annually review the HART program and prioritize 5 trails. Staff indicated that this was not something that should be added to the list (Hart Review and trails). The review is just done on a yearly basis by the Commission. They (the City) did not complete all the previous projects they wanted and there are no new ones on the burner. Staff then gave brief status summary with the trails and HART.

Commissioner CarlinSchauer questioned about getting things cleaned up on the Spit. He wants the whole thing cleaned up. He believes it is one of the most beautiful places and he wants to see it cleaned up. Staff explained that code enforcement is on the agenda and will be addressed actually at a worksession on March 7, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. with City Council. Staff will list these as two different items for the list. This is definitely on the radar with planning too.

Chair Bremicker wanted to address increasing camping areas on the Spit. He feels this would also present very little expense compared to the revenue it would bring in...he was specifically referencing the large area on the east side of the spit. Staff will add - Expand camping areas on the Spit.

Staff read the items under Actions of the Commission. Commissioner Harrauld noted that this was where she would appreciate the individual groups be invited to speak to the Commissioners at each meeting after the issue of Karen Hornaday park. Staff will delete the Commissioners attend other meetings.

Staff clarified what it means to have the commission represented at a minimum of one council meeting each month to advocate their support for parks and recreation projects.

Commissioner Cumming requested clarification on addressing the Marina Park entrance idea. Staff state this was noted in the Spit Comprehensive plan. Commissioner Cumming requested this item to be on the 1-2 goals. Staff will separate this project into stages on the plan.

Staff stated that Commissioners need to be careful when they speak on the behalf of the Commission for different items. They need to make sure that the Commission has discussed and made motions on requested action(s) before speaking to council on the topic.

The next item on the plan addressed was what the staff or commission could provide more than what is currently being done. Staff commented that they could provide paper for whatever the commission would like or needed to assist in support on items on their agenda.

There was no further discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

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There was no new business.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

A. Written comments from Commissioner Archibald on Agenda Items (Previously Submitted for January Regular Meeting)

Commissioner Harrauld requested clarification on item number three of Commissioner Archibald's comment submittal. Chair Bremicker requested this to be included in the regular agenda for the March meeting so Commissioner Archibald could speak upon it. Planning Technician Engebretsen stated that a recommendation from the Economic Development Advisory Commission was submitted to Council so staff can provide that at the next meeting. Deputy City Clerk Krause noted that Commissioner Archibald was probably commenting on the HERC building this was an item on the January agenda and it was included this time for his comments on the park.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

There were no audience comments.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL MEMBER *(if one is assigned)*

None.

COMMENTS OF STAFF MEMBERS

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Otteson comments were inaudible from the audience section.

Planning Technician Engebretsen commented it is always a pretty good trick when you have a big issue we like to look at all the sides and when it comes down to making a decision sometimes it is difficult so as the Commissioners think of Karen Hornaday Park, think about the end goal and look at where you want to be in three months or six months and where you want to go. Great meeting and very productive and looks forward to this continuing.

Deputy City Clerk Krause commented that the Commission might want to add to the Commission's to do list but instead of holding a park day as they usually do each year, to add the idea of supporting the Highland games instead.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Brann requested additional copies of the document submitted by Jack Wiles and thanked everyone and that it was a good meeting.

Commissioner CarlinSchauer apologized again for his tardiness; he believes that everything they get is wonderful, the information is great and he would like push forward and get some of the things done and to see more pressure applied as appropriate to get things done. He did wish his schedule wasn't so tight that he had to cram everything in.

Commissioner Harrauld had no comment.

Commissioner Cumming stated that she is really desirous of and into completing a project that looks like something has been accomplished; that doesn't just mean endless discussions or band aids and she won't mention any specifics; so pretty good meeting - she guessed - if specifics come out of it.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Bremicker thought that was a very good idea and requested this item to be on the next agenda as a discussion item for update and information from Commissioner Archibald. He then reminded the Commissioners of the next worksession and regular meeting dates. He thanked everyone and he is extremely impressed by all the energy this group has and they are wearing him out. He likes to see the group accomplishing things. He hates to have the long meetings but as long as they accomplish something it is all good.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission Chair Bremicker adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m. There will be a Worksession on Friday, March 4, 2011 at 5:30 P.M. The next regular meeting is Thursday, MARCH 17, 2011 at 5:30 p.m. at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers.

RENEE KRAUSE, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: _____